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Testing the Francis Burnout Inventory among Anglican clergy in England

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Abstract

Drawing on the classic model of balanced affect, the Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI) conceptualised good work-related psychological health among religious leaders in terms of negative affect being balanced by positive affect. In the FBI negative affect is assessed by the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry (SEEM) and positive affect is assessed by the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS). A sample of 99 Anglican clergy serving in a rural diocese in the Church of England (75 men and 24 women) completed SEEM and SIMS together with the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) as an independent measure of wellbeing. The results confirm the hypothesis that high SIMS scores reduced the negative effects of high SEEM scores on the independent measure of wellbeing. *Keywords:* balanced affect, purpose in life, religious leaders, exhaustion, satisfaction, burnout

Introduction

The Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI), introduced by Francis, Kaldor, Robbins, and Castle (2005), differs in two important ways from the longer-established Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) as proposed by Maslach and Jackson (1996). First, although the MBI has been and continues to be used in a number of studies among clergy, including for example work reported by Evers and Tomic (2003), Golden, Piedmont, Ciarrocchi, and Rodgeron (2004), Raj and Dean (2005), Miner (2007a, 2007b) and Doolittle (2007, 2010), Chandler (2009), Joseph, Corveleyn, Luyten, and de Witte (2010), Buys and Rothmann (2010), Parker and Martin (2011), Joseph, Luyten, Corveleyn, and de Witte (2011), Rossetti (2011), Küçüksüleymanoğlu (2013), Rossetti and Rhoades (2013), Herrera, Pedrosa, Galindo, Suárez-Álvarez, Villardón, and García-Cueto (2014), Proeschold-Bell, Yang, Toth, Rivers, and Carder (2014), Crea and Francis (2015), Adams, Hough, Proeschold-Bell, Yao, and Kolkin (2016), Büssing, Baumann, Jacobs, and Frick (2017), and Vicente-Galindo, López-Herrera, Pedrosa, Suárez-Álvarez, Galindo-Villardón, and García-Cueto (2017), this instrument was not designed specifically for use among clergy. In an initial critique of the application of the MBI among clergy, Rutledge and Francis (2004) pointed to discrepancies between some of the items and the ways in which clergy may speak of their professional activity. As a response to this critique, Rutledge and Francis (2004) developed a modified form of the MBI shaped to reflect the experiences and vocabulary of religious leaders. This modified instrument has been tested in a series of studies, including Francis and Rutledge (2000), Kay (2000), Francis, Loudon, and Rutledge (2004), Francis and Turton (2004a, 2004b), Randall (2004, 2007), Rutledge (2006), Turton and Francis (2007), Francis, Turton, and Loudon (2007), Francis, Robbins, Ralph, Turton, and Ralph (2010), and Miller-Clarkson (2013). By way of contrast the FBI was developed specifically for use among clergy.

Second, the FBI proposes a different model of burnout from that proposed by the MBI. The MBI assesses burnout by three scales designed to measure emotional exhaustion, depersonalisation, and low personal accomplishment. According to this model, emotional exhaustion is the lead and primary indicator of burnout (Maslach & Jackson, 1996). Emotional exhaustion then leads to depersonalisation, and depersonalisation leads to the loss of the sense of accomplishment. The strength of this model is that it generates theories regarding the progressive development of the symptoms of burnout. The weakness is that the model does not offer clear insights into remedial or preventative strategies. It may not be easy to remove the causes of emotional burnout with which religious leaders are routinely faced day-by-day, especially in a social context in which the work loads of religious leaders increase while the human resources are decreasing in view of falling vocations and eroding income.

The FBI assesses burnout by two scales designed to measure emotional exhaustion in ministry and satisfaction in ministry. According to Francis' conceptualisation the relationship between these two components is described as one of balanced affect. The two components are not related sequentially but are viewed as contemporaneous and orthogonal. The notion of balanced affect has its roots in the classic theories of Bradburn (1969). According to Bradburn's theories positive affect and negative affect are not opposite poles of a single continuum but independent psychological phenomena. In this sense it is reasonable and possible for an individual to record both high levels of positive affect and high levels of negative affect. In other words, it is reasonable and possible for individual religious leaders to record both high levels of satisfaction in ministry and high levels of emotional exhaustion in ministry. According to Bradburn's theories high levels of positive affect are able to offset high levels of negative affect. The strength of the model is that it generates theories about how the problems of poor work-related psychological health or burnout among religious

leaders may be addressed in terms of remedial and preventative strategies. Even when it may not be possible to reduce the causes of emotional exhaustion in ministry, it may be possible to explore ways of compensating for high levels of emotional exhaustion by maximising strategies for enhancing the sense of satisfaction in ministry.

An initial study to test the validity of the balanced affect model of burnout among religious leaders was reported by Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011) among 744 clergy serving in the Presbyterian Church (USA). The strategy adopted by this study examined the incremental impact on independent measures of burnout of the interaction term created by the product of the two measures of negative affect (Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry) and positive affect (Satisfaction in Ministry Scale) after taking into account the impact of these two factors considered separately. In this initial study by Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011), the two independent measures of burnout were quite simple indices of self-perceived physical health and self-perceived burnout. Self-perceived physical health was assessed by the question: ‘How would you rate your overall health at the present time?’ with the following four response options: excellent, good, fair, and poor. Self-perceived burnout was assessed by the question: ‘To what extent do you think you are suffering from burnout in your current call?’ with the following four response options: to a great extent, to some extent, to a small extent, and not at all. Consistent with the theory of balanced affect, the data demonstrated that the mitigating effects of positive affect on the two independent measures of burnout increased with increasing levels of negative affect. Subsequent studies have replicated the initial study by employing other independent measures of burnout among other groups of clergy. Each of these studies has supported the balanced affect model.

The first replication by Francis, Laycock, and Brewster (2017) among 658 clergy serving in the Church of England employed three independent measures of burnout: thoughts

of leaving ministry since ordination, count of psychosomatic ailments, and count of psychological distress. Thoughts of leaving ministry were assessed by the question, 'Have you since ordination considered leaving the priesthood?' rated against four responses (no, once or twice, several times, frequently). Psychosomatic ailments were assessed by a list of five conditions (chronic indigestion, frequent headaches, insomnia, migraines, stomach complaints), prefaced by the question, 'Since ordination have you experienced any of the following?'. Psychological distress was assessed by a list of four conditions (acute anxiety, depression, nervous breakdown, suicidal thoughts) prefaced by the question, 'Since ordination have you experienced any of the following?'.

The second replication study by Francis, Laycock, and Crea (2017) among 155 priests serving in the Roman Catholic Church in Italy employed the Purpose in Life Scale developed by Robbins and Francis (2000) as an independent measure of burnout. This is a twelve-item measure designed to assess a unidimensional construct related to meaning and purpose in life. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale from disagree strongly, through not certain, to agree strongly. The third replication study by Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017) among 95 priests and 61 religious sisters serving in the Roman Catholic Church in Italy also employed the Purpose in Life Scale (Robbins & Francis, 2000). The fourth replication study by Village, Payne, and Francis (2018) among 358 Anglican priests serving in the Church in Wales employed a single item index of thoughts of leaving ministry since ordination (no, once or twice, several times, and frequently) as an independent measure of burnout.

The value of replication studies

In light of the much publicised Replication Project within the broad field of psychology (see Fradera, 2015), there is an increasing call for replication studies in the field of psychology and psychometrics that may validate or invalidate previous research. Against this background of the Replication Project, the present study takes the view that there is real

value in building on the five studies reported by Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011), Francis, Laycock, and Brewster (2017), Francis, Laycock, and Crea (2017), Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017), and Village, Payne, and Francis (2018). The present further replication study employs as an independent measure of burnout the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-being Scale.

The Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) was developed to measure positive mental health at the population level (see Tennant et al., 2007). This 14-item instrument comprises items relevant to both eudaimonic (positive psychological functioning) and hedonic (affective) dimensions of wellbeing. Each item is rated on a five-point scale of frequency (none of the time, rarely, some of the time, often, and all of the time) ‘as best describes your experience over the last two weeks’. While originally validated for use among adults in England and Scotland, the WEMWBS has also been validated in Northern Ireland (Lloyd & Devine, 2012), Spain (López et al., 2012; Castellví et al., 2013), Italy (Gremigni & Stewart-Brown, 2011), France (Trousselard et al., 2016), China (Dong et al., 2016), and Norway (Smith et al., 2017) and for use among adolescents in the UK (Clarke et al., 2011). Although the WEMWBS does not appear to have been used in previous studies among clergy, it has been used among other professions, including general medical practitioners (Murray, Cardwell, & Donnelly, 2017), veterinary practitioners (Bartram, Yadegarfar, & Baldwin, 2009), and teachers (Kidger et al., 2016).

Research question

Taking the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale as an independent index of wellbeing the present study tests the hypothesis that there is a positive correlation between satisfaction in ministry and mental wellbeing scores; that there is a negative correlation between emotional exhaustion and mental wellbeing scores; and that the interaction term between emotional exhaustion and satisfaction in ministry would account for additional

variance within mental wellbeing scores, indicating that the mitigating effect of satisfaction in ministry on purpose in life increases with increasing levels of negative affect.

Method

Procedure

The *Ministry Today* survey was delivered by post to 203 Anglican clergy serving in a rural diocese in the Church of England. Participation was voluntary and participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The survey comprised eight sections, including several standard and recognised instruments. Of the 203 surveys distributed, after some encouragement, 104 were returned of which 99 were thoroughly completed and useful for the analysis reported in this paper designed to test the balanced affect model of work-related psychological health.

Measures

Work-related psychological health was assessed by the two scales reported by the Francis Burnout Inventory (FBI; Francis, Kaldor, Robbins, & Castle, 2005). This 22-item instrument comprises the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry (SEEM) and the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale (SIMS). Each item is assessed on a five-point scale: disagree strongly (1), disagree (2), not certain (3), agree (4), and agree strongly (5). Example items concerned with emotional exhaustion are: 'I feel drained in fulfilling my ministry roles' and 'I am less patient with those among whom I minister than I used to be'. Example items concerned with satisfaction in ministry include: 'The ministry here gives real purpose and meaning to my life' and 'I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in my current ministry'.

Mental wellbeing was assessed by the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) developed by Tennant et al. (2007). This instrument comprises 14 positively-worded items covering different aspects of eudaimonic and hedonic mental wellbeing.

Example items include: 'I've been feeling optimistic about the future' and 'I've been dealing with problems well'. Each item is rated on a five-point Likert scale: none of the time (1), rarely (2), some of the time (3), often (4), and all of the time (5). Item ratings are summed to produce a scale score ranging between 14 and 70, with higher scores representing higher levels of mental wellbeing.

Participants

Of the 99 Anglican clergy whose data were analysed in this study, 24 were clergywomen and 75 were clergymen. The spread of ages for these 99 Anglican clergy (as of 31 December 2012) was 30-39 (3), 40-49 (20), 50-59 (51) and 60-69 (25). The question on marital status indicated that 12 were single, 80 were married, 2 were widowed, 2 were divorced and 3 were divorced and remarried.

Data analysis

The data were analysed by means of the SPSS statistical package using the reliability, correlation, factor and regression routines.

Results

- insert table 1 about here -

The first step in data analysis examines the psychometric properties of the two scales of the Francis Burnout Inventory (Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry and Satisfaction in Ministry Scale), in terms of the correlations between each individual item and the sum of the other items, factor loadings on the first factor extracted by principal component analysis (unrotated), item endorsement (as the sum of the agree strongly and agree responses), the alpha coefficient (Cronbach, 1951) as an index of internal consistency reliability, and the proportion of variance accounted for by the principal component as an index of item homogeneity.

In terms of the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry, table 1 demonstrates good properties of internal consistency reliability and item homogeneity, with an alpha coefficient of .86 and the first factor accounting for 42% of the variance. In terms of indicators of emotional exhaustion, some idea of the extent of the problem among Anglican clergy is given by paying attention to the three items attracting the highest levels of endorsement. Half of the clergy considered that they felt drained by fulfilling their ministry roles (51%), two-fifths of the clergy found themselves frustrated in their attempts to accomplish tasks important to them (39%), and reported that fatigue and irritation are part of their daily experience (38%).

In terms of the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale, table 1 demonstrates good properties of internal consistency reliability and item homogeneity, with an alpha coefficient of .88 and the first factor accounting for 47% of the variance. In terms of indicators of satisfaction in ministry, some idea of the level of reward experienced by clergy is given by paying attention to the six items attracting the highest levels of endorsement. At least eight out of every ten of the clergy felt that their pastoral ministry had a positive influence on people's lives (96%), that they felt really appreciated by people (89%), that they were really glad that they had entered the ministry (87%), that they gain a lot of personal satisfaction from fulfilling their ministry roles (86%), that they gain a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in their current ministry (86%), and that they feel that their teaching ministry has a positive influence on people's faith (81%).

- insert table 2 about here -

The second step in data analysis examines the mean scale scores on the three core variables employed in the analysis and the correlations between them. Table 2 demonstrates that mental wellbeing scores are correlated positively with satisfaction in ministry and negatively with emotional exhaustion in ministry; and that there is a clear negative correlation between satisfaction in ministry and emotional exhaustion in ministry.

- insert table 3 about here -

The third and final step in data analysis tests the balanced affect model of work-related psychological health and burnout. To test the notion of balanced affect, the effects of SEEM and SIMS scores on the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale scores were tested in a multiple regression model in which SEEM and SIMS scores were allowed to interact after taking the effect of sex into account. The marginal effect of SIMS on the model with the interaction term included was statistically non-significant which explains why this term does not appear in the model as displayed in table 3. The results indicated a highly significant interaction. This interaction term suggested that the mitigating effects of ministry satisfaction on burnout were greater when the level of emotional exhaustion was higher, and this is clearly illustrated in figure 1.

- insert figure 1 about here -

Conclusion

This study set out to build on and to extend earlier work reported by Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011), Francis, Laycock, and Brewster (2017), Francis, Laycock, and Crea (2017), Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017), and Village, Payne, and Francis (2018) designed to test the balanced affect model of work-related psychological health and burnout among religious leaders, as operationalised by the Francis Burnout Inventory. The balanced affect model of work-related psychological health maintains that positive affect serves to offset the deleterious consequences of negative affect in terms of overall psychological wellbeing. Accordingly the effects of positive affect on maintaining overall psychological wellbeing increase in importance in line with increasing levels of negative affect. Within the Francis Burnout Inventory positive affect is operationalised by the Satisfaction in Ministry Scale and negative affect is operationalised by the Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry. Francis, Village, Robbins, and Wulff (2011), Francis, Laycock, and Brewster

(2017), Francis, Laycock, and Crea (2017), Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017), and Village, Payne, and Francis (2018) provided support for the balanced affect model by demonstrating the significance of the interaction term between emotional exhaustion and satisfaction in ministry against an independent measure of burnout.

The present study replicated and extended this earlier work by employing as the dependent variable a different measure of psychological wellbeing not previously employed in the developing series of studies, namely the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Well-Being Scale (WEMWBS) developed by Tennant *et al.* (2007). The data from this further replication study also unequivocally supports the balanced affect model of work-related psychological health among religious leaders, and consequently provides further support for the theory and further construct validation for the Francis Burnout Inventory as an operationalised form of that theory.

In an earlier paper, Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017) argued that implications follow from these empirical findings for the ways in which practical theologians and pastoral theologians may conceptualise and understand poor work-related psychological health and professional burnout among those engaged in religious and pastoral leadership. The differentiation between positive affect and negative affect allows these distinctive psychological phenomena to be considered independently. While religious leaders need properly to be warned again the experiences and situations that generate negative affect, Francis, Crea, and Laycock (2017) argued that it is also reasonable and realistic to anticipate that many of these factors cannot be effectively removed from the pastoral experience. The pastoral vocation anticipates being engaged with others in emotionally exhausting contexts. On the other hand, the experiences and the situations that generate positive affect may be more within the control of individual religious leaders. It is also within the capacity of continuing vocational development programmes to enable individual religious leaders to

become more consciously aware of those experiences and situations that resource positive affect for them. In this way the balanced affect model of good work-related psychological health offers practical theologians and pastoral theologians insights into effective strategies that may enhance the work-related psychological health of religious leaders and reduce their vulnerability to professional burnout.

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Table 1

Francis Burnout Inventory: Scale properties

	<i>r</i>	<i>f</i>	%
<i>Scale of Emotional Exhaustion in Ministry</i>			
I feel drained by fulfilling my ministry roles	.60	.69	51
Fatigue and irritation are part of my daily experience	.70	.77	38
I am invaded by sadness I can't explain	.64	.73	12
I am feeling negative or cynical about the people with whom I work	.67	.76	11
I always have enthusiasm for my work*	.65	.74	60
My humour has a cynical and biting tone	.34	.42	12
I find myself spending less and less time with those among whom I minister	.44	.53	31
I have been discouraged by the lack of personal support for me here	.57	.68	14
I find myself frustrated in my attempts to accomplish tasks important to me	.46	.54	39
I am less patient with those among whom I minister than I used to be	.57	.67	17
I am becoming less flexible in my dealings with those among whom I minister	.48	.57	9
Alpha / % variance	.86	42%	
<i>Satisfaction in Ministry Scale</i>			
I have accomplished many worthwhile things in my current ministry	.63	.71	77
I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from working with people in my current ministry	.65	.72	86
I deal very effectively with the problems of the people in my current ministry	.55	.63	59
I can easily understand how those among whom I minister feel about things	.30	.37	71
I feel very positive about my current ministry	.70	.78	68
I feel that my pastoral ministry has a positive influence on people's lives	.39	.46	96
I feel that my teaching ministry has a positive influence on people's faith	.48	.56	81
I feel that my ministry is really appreciated by people	.61	.70	89
I am really glad that I entered the ministry	.68	.76	87
The ministry here gives real purpose and meaning to my life	.75	.83	75
I gain a lot of personal satisfaction from fulfilling my ministry roles	.79	.85	86
Alpha / % variance	.88	47%	

Note: N = 99

* This item has been reverse coded to compute the correlations, but not the percentage endorsement

r = correlation between item and sum of other ten items*f* = loading on principal factor (unrotated)

% = sum of agree strongly and agree responses

Table 2

Mean scale scores and correlation matrix

	Alpha	Mean	SD	SIMS	SEEM
Well Being Scale (WEMWBS)	.91	48.36	7.25	.75	-.74
Emotional Exhaustion	.86	27.66	7.32	-.73	
Satisfaction in Ministry	.88	43.41	5.86		

(N = 99)

Table 3

Multiple regression of WEMWBS on SEEM and interaction with SIMS

	B	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i> <
Constant	63.8800	4.0736	15.68	.001
SEX	-.4580	1.0409	-.44	NS
AGE	-.3276	.6109	-.53	NS
SEEM	-1.0803	.1004	-10.76	.001
SEEM * SIMS	.01388	.00307	4.52	.001

(N = 99)

Figure 1

